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SCHOOLSCAPES

WORKING TOGETHER
TO INSTRUCT, SOCIALIZE AND PROVIDE QUALIFICATIONS

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Summary

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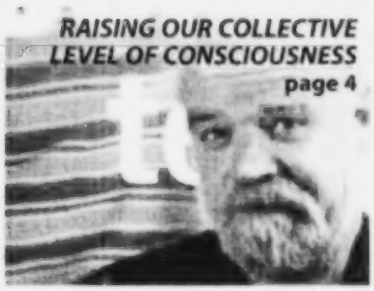

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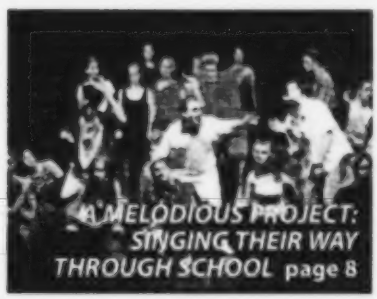


***A MELODIOUS PROJECT: SINGING THEIR WAY THROUGH SCHOOL* page 8**

COVER PAGE
Ginette Gagné,
Ecology Teacher,
École secondaire Neufchâtel

By Francine Payette

Success for all students is possibly the biggest challenge schools face. Students can have such a wide variety of difficulties that trying to categorize them often leads to students' exclusion, preventing many from integrating smoothly into society.

Such was the topic of reflection for administrators at October's provincewide meeting, as well as at the November conference entitled *Opening All the Doors to Success*. At the latter, educators and administrators examined, shared and discussed various ways to support students experiencing difficulty along their educational path.

A determining factor in student success is no doubt the benevolent eye of the teacher, whose meticulous professional actions cultivate student motivation and effort.

In this issue of *Schoolscapes*, you will read about many projects that illustrate the openness of teachers towards their students. You will also note that, increasingly, teachers are working in collaboration with all stakeholders.

In addition, to highlight this week of celebration, and pay tribute to the work of teachers, this issue also features an excerpt of a letter by Albert Camus to Monsieur Germain, his former schoolteacher. The text speaks of the teacher's hard work, generosity, affection and solicitude, all which remained etched in the memory of the student long into his adult life.

It is our hope that the memory evoked by Camus strikes a personal chord and that it becomes a source of encouragement as you continue in your work of educating each and every one of your students.

Enjoy your reading!

By Pascale Sauvé
(Translation)

Student diversity

Taking student diversity into account is one of the major concerns of the reform," emphasized Nicole Gagnon (Direction générale de la formation des jeunes), in charge of the organization of the provincewide meetings. Indeed, Québec schools accommodate 900 000 students, all with very different characteristics and needs. Yet they have one common goal: success for all students. But in day-to-day practice, how do you manage an organization that caters to such a diversified clientele?

That was the question participants examined during the meeting. After the launch of the much-awaited *Policy on the Evaluation of Learning* and an energizing presentation by anthropologist and writer Serge Bouchard, the afternoon was devoted to the first challenge: how to adapt management practices to respond to the needs of a diverse student population. Following a plenary session on the topic, participants broke into groups to explore the issue in a workshop, focusing in particular on the student's educational progress—promotion, bridges and continuum.

On day two, the second management challenge was put forth: integrating management frameworks. *New Approaches, New Solutions*, the *Basic School Regulation*, the *Québec Education Program* and the *Policy on the Evaluation of Learning* are some of the documents that exist to provide an educational framework and direction for school life. How are these documents integrated into school life and day-to-day practices? Who does what? What kind of partnership should there be between schools and the school board? Plenary sessions and workshops gave participants the opportunity to examine these questions, share their experiences and equip themselves with strategies for fostering this integration.

After five years of provincewide meetings, the time has come for a progress report. To this effect, Robert Bisaillon, assistant deputy minister for preschool, elementary and secondary education, invited participants to assess the competencies they have developed over the last few years at these provincewide meetings. What has been accomplished? Where are we now? "I will conduct the same exercise on my side," he said. This progress report will be shared at the next provincewide meeting, in April.

The Québec education system has some 900 000 students, all with very different characteristics and needs. Yet schools all have one common goal: success for each and every learner.

By Lise Ferron

ouchard frequently writes for *Le Devoir* and participates in radio shows on *Radio-Canada* to comment on the changes affecting our society. At the provincewide meeting, he read one of his own texts, "Dure école", and discussed his views on modern-day society, the role of school, and the challenges faced by educators and parents.

Society places too much emphasis on intelligence, he noted. He illustrated his point with a personal anecdote: when he was young, he was initially refused entry into higher-level education because he did not do well enough on the IQ test. Fortunately, his mother insisted the school take him. Bouchard eventually went on to complete a Ph.D. in anthropology at McGill. "It's not a question of intelligence, but of consciousness," he said. "It's consciousness that makes us human. Ignorance is a lack of consciousness. We need to raise our level of individual and collective consciousness."

Bouchard stressed that despite all the current problems in our world, we have a duty to transmit hope to our children. "We are beings of hope. Life, although tough—really tough—must be appreciated, and that is the most important element in the transmission of knowledge." To transmit this message of hope, passion and good nature, he said, "we need to believe in ourselves as a collectivity."

A few elements to facilitate the integration of resources

Provincial educational project:
- curriculum
- programs and content
- evaluation and certification of studies

Local educational project:
- renewal
- vision of education
- values to develop
- priorities to establish

Moving from a traditional to a forward-thinking dynamic:
- from control to trust
- from conformity to support
- from constraints to performance
- from contracts to self-discipline

Leadership qualities:
- humility
- openness
- urgency
- ensuring the transfer of expertise
- adopting a socio-constructivist approach

Winning conditions for a good partnership:
- participative management
- decentralization
- professional ethics

Key words for partnerships:
- trust
- transparency

By Eve Krakow

e need to reconsider the category-based approach, in which services are offered to students according to their belonging to a category of deficiency or difficulty," she said. Research and practice have shown the negative effects of such categories. Not only is there a danger in believing that students in a particular category are all the same, but other students may require services as well. "The challenge lies in how to adopt a student-based approach."

The policy also places new emphasis on meeting the needs of all students, rather than focusing on one category of "at-risk" students: any student may experience difficulties at some point during his or her studies. "For the majority, preventive measures may be sufficient. Only a small percentage require an individualized plan," Gosselin noted.

She proposed several lines of action: prevention, differentiation of interventions, involvement of complementary services, working with family and community, diversifying educational paths, participatory management, and working together to break the isolation. Participants continued to explore these ideas and issues in the workshop that followed.

Monique Hébert, president of the Commission des programmes d'études (CPE), presented the main points of a brief to the Minister, entitled "A Question of Motivation: Different Students, Different Programs." The brief proposes orientations for defining differentiated and optional programs at the secondary level.

An English summary of the brief can be found on the CPE's Website, at <www.cpe.gouv.qc.ca/synth_elevesdiff_a.htm>, while an English version of the full brief can be found by going directly to: <www.cpe.gouv.qc.ca/pdf/BRIEF.pdf>

By Pascale Sauvé
(Translation)

On November 10 and 11, 2003, some 650 stakeholders gathered in Québec City for *Opening All the Doors to Success*, a conference on the success of students experiencing learning difficulties. Over the course of the two-day event, more than 50 workshops were offered. *Schoolscapes* was on site and brings you a report on some of the presentations and workshops given at the conference.

Organized by the Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec (MEQ) in collaboration with the Groupe de concertation en adaptation scolaire, the conference brought together personnel from school boards across Québec to engage in discussion and reflection on school success. Each board was invited to send a delegation representing school administrators, personnel from complementary educational services, teachers and parents. Pierre Reid, Minister of Education, and Pierre Lucier, Deputy Minister of Education, spoke to participants at this event.

"Our primary challenge is to foster success among the greatest number of students possible, despite their different needs, interests and abilities," said Reid. "This is no easy task, but it is one that you and I have chosen to undertake. The kind of success we are looking for belongs to everyone," the minister continued. "It belongs to students with intellectual difficulties, for whom increased autonomy is often the key to success. It belongs to students with learning difficulties, for whom teachers have to exercise greater effort and creativity to express their passion. It belongs to the more talented students, for whom boredom may be lurking around the bend, and to all those requiring continual stimulation."

"We all know that growth and learning are paths that are never engraved in stone," said Lucier in his opening address. "I don't think I'm wrong in believing that you're here because you're convinced that success is always possible. I'm impressed by the variety and creativity behind the many experiences that will be shared at this conference." ■

Visit the following website to find the conference program, presenters' texts, photos, workshop documents, etc.
<www.meq.gouv.qc.ca/dassc/pageadapt.html>

Pierre Reid, Minister of Education

Pierre Lucier, Deputy Minister of Education

Launch of the Reference Framework

The document *Students with Learning Difficulties: Reference Framework for Intervention* was officially launched at the conference. "It's not meant to be a set of instructions, nor a recipe, but rather, a source of inspiration to guide actions and interventions with students," explained Robert Bisaillon, assistant deputy minister for preschool, elementary and secondary education. The document aims to shed new light on how to best provide assistance to students with learning difficulties and facilitate the search for effective intervention measures that meet their needs. It is designed for teachers, student services staff, counsellors and administrators, and should also be of interest to parents.

Copies of the framework have been sent to schools and school boards. It can also be viewed at <www.meq.gouv.qc.ca/dassc/pageadapt.html>.

By Pascale Sauvé
(Translation)

What makes some students stay on track while others choose a bypass route? The answer is motivation, according to Roch Chouinard, guest speaker at the conference on success for students experiencing learning difficulties. And what if our practices could make all the difference for students in difficulty? He believes they can.

In the last few decades, several approaches have been attempted to help students with learning difficulties. Some approaches consist of doing the same thing, such as repeating a grade, adding periods to the timetable or spreading out the content, while others aim to adapt the teaching material or to lighten the curriculum and program contents. "All these approaches make two common assumptions about learning difficulties," said Chouinard. "First, that students in difficulty necessarily have lesser academic abilities and so we have to lower our expectations of them. Second, that these difficulties are caused by personal factors, outside the school and the context in which this learning takes place."

Yet recent studies in education science show that students experiencing learning difficulties often have the potential to succeed, and that school practices are often what make the difference. For this reason, Chouinard examined the question of academic difficulties through the lens of the student's motivation to learn—a perspective that provides greater understanding of the problems experienced by students having difficulty, that highlights the role of the learning context, and that offers several avenues of intervention for educators.

Roch Chouinard

Roch Chouinard, who has a Ph.D. in developmental psychology, is an associate professor in the Department of Educational Psychology and Adult Education at the Faculty of Education of Université de Montréal and a regular researcher at the Centre de recherche et d'intervention sur la réussite scolaire (CRIRES). For the past 15 years, he has been studying conditions for classroom learning, from elementary school to university.

By Réjane Bougé
(Translation)

A Melodious Project:
Singing Their Way Through School

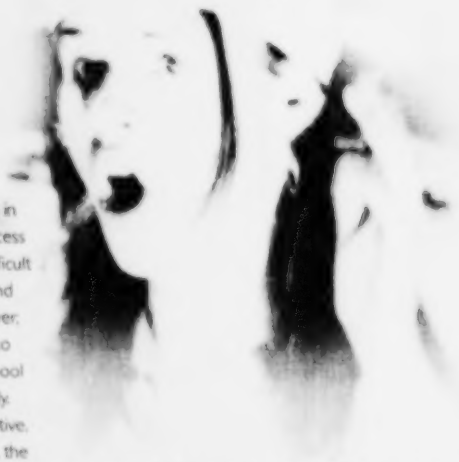
The passion of one teacher on the North Shore has led to an extraordinary artistic and educational project.

Jacinthe Bernard has energy to spare. She is a veritable spark plug in her school! When this special education teacher is not in class or leading a workshop on spiritual and community life, she enchants her school with music—from Secondary I to V. "I've always been immersed in music," she said. "I remember the music I heard as a child, in church, or sung by popular choirs." It is therefore not surprising that she has now become a choir director.

It all began in 1995, when she attended a concert in the neighbouring town of Sept-Îles and brought a few students along. They were absolutely thrilled. Hooked. So Bernard began directing them as part of a simple extra-curricular activity, set into the timetable, over lunch hour. These dozen enthusiasts soon formed the core of what would become the CELASIDO choir. CELA, for the Centre éducatif l'Abri, at Port-Cartier secondary school, where the project takes place. SI-DO, for the last two notes of the scale. Today, about sixty young people are involved with the group, as singers and dancers, giving concerts and travelling.

A unifying activity

The cultural project was very well received in this working class town of 7 000, where access to theatre and music shows is rendered difficult because of the distance to larger centres and the lack of adequate local spaces. Moreover, by its very nature, this kind of project also has a multitude of educational benefits. School principal Violaine Doyle saw this immediately. Not only did she strongly support the initiative, but she helped to develop it further. Slowly, the project grew and its goals broadened: in a region suffering from a high dropout rate, the choir also served as a means to encourage students to stay in school. "This project incorporates important human values, and therefore enhances the environment in which our students live, while developing their sense of belonging to the school," explained the equally energetic Doyle, whose complicity with Bernard is evident. Yes, the young people learn the rudiments of music and movement. "But more importantly, within CELASIDO, they also find a source of motivation, a project that brings them together, something positive to identify with." A fun time, of course, but also a very constructive one.



It is an integrating project in more than one way. In addition to drawing on several artistic disciplines—voice, dance, theatrical expression and visual arts—it also brings in students who are usually left isolated. In CELASIDO, all students, including several with mild to severe disabilities and students with learning difficulties, work alongside each other. The activity is therefore far from one reserved for an "elite" brand of student. That was a pitfall Bernard wanted to avoid at all costs. Teachers have also joined the group's ranks. In fact, the choir is supported by an entire team of people who work on everything from the stage directions to the musical arrangements.

The CELASIDO choir opened the conference with an invigorating performance.

A recognized program

Over the years, the training has been refined and institutionalized. Inspired by the sports-study program, a choir-study program was created. Except that in this case, "the benefits go beyond the individual, benefiting the whole school," said Doyle. Choir singers meet every Tuesday and Thursday during third period. Since that means they're missing a regular class, they're paired with other students, who take notes for them. On Wednesdays and Fridays during lunch hour, the young artists have a study period, supervised by teachers, to catch up on their work. This structure works so well that graduating students now get two Secondary V credits at the end of the year for their participation in the choir.

Harmonious testimonials

Following their performance (which opened the conference, setting a very upbeat tone), some of the students shared their opinions on the experience. Their comments confirm the statements made by their teacher and principal.

The girls, who outnumber the boys in the mixed choir, were very excited, thrilled by the warm welcome they had received. "It's no ordinary choir; we don't just stand there stiff as a board. It's a lot more dynamic than that," said Magalie. Catherine and Marie-Ève agreed. Here they learn how to move. Sometimes the students even create their own choreographies and submit texts. "It's very energizing," said Vickie. In addition to songs like those of Belgian singer Maurane, Quebec songwriter Luc Plamondon, or classical pieces, they love to do Russian and Arab songs. In fact, they're very proud to touch on these foreign languages. "It's given me more self-confidence," Véronique added. Such a breath of fresh air from this female quintet!

And who says this kind of activity isn't also for young men? Olivier, who sings tenor, has had to struggle against many common prejudices and stereotypes. He spoke of the comfort he found within the group. "When things aren't going well, you don't feel so alone. There are people around you to support you." Boys and girls alike need this kind of mutual help. It is well known that the North Shore has a high suicide rate among young men. This reality has in fact been the theme of some of the group's shows. Olivier also admits he's had to work extra hard at some school subjects in order to remain in the choir. For Luc, it was a class on gospel music that inspired him, and it is the audience that electrifies him. "I'm not really looking forward to finishing secondary school," he said. Well, he shouldn't despair: former members sometimes join in.

A network in the making

"At Port-Cartier, young people have enough money to buy the things they want. Most people earn a comfortable learning. So our students are not economically disadvantaged, but they don't attend enough cultural events." Bernard knows that her project also helps pull young people out of the spiral of consumerism to focus on other values and become active citizens. In the coming months, fruitful exchanges with other choirs, from both Quebec and France, are on the agenda. Similar projects are in the making at schools in Granby, l'Islet-sur-Mer and Forestville. Could this result in a lasting choral network? Doyle and Bernard would be delighted.

Robert Bouillon and Pierre Lucier enjoying the CELASIDO choir's performance

Jacinthe Bernard, choir director, and Violaine Doyle, principal of Port-Cartier secondary school

DO-RÉ-MI-FA-CE-LA-SI-DO! One teacher's passion has led these young people from Port-Cartier to the top of the scale.

With the education reform, the goal of school is success for all. While teachers agree with this worthy objective, many remain perplexed. Is this goal realistic? How can it be achieved? How does it translate into day-to-day practice? The answer to these legitimate questions lies in changing the beliefs that have influenced our education system to date.

By Brigitte Trudel
(Translation)

Seeing our education system in a new way

When we were young, we fell into a representation of the education system that was heavily imbued with the values of selection. Before the current reform, it was this vision that influenced our ideas and practices in school," said Yvon Rousseau, from the Direction de l'adaptation scolaire et des services complémentaires at the MEQ.

Thus, the education system as we have known it until recently, functioned according to a categorical system. Its application required that we expect the same performance from all students. To succeed, students had to conform to established criteria and obtain the prescribed passing grade. According to this mode of representation, success for all students was not possible since learning, organized according to certain standards, aimed to place students into one of two categories: those who obtained a passing grade and those who failed.

Yvon Rousseau, Direction de l'adaptation scolaire et des services complémentaires

Yet if we are to achieve success for all, we must have realistic expectations. That is the role that the new vision of the education system, which gave way to the reform, intends to fill.

This vision is very different from the former one. Its application centres on learning that is adapted to each individual's potential and that proposes differentiated requirements. These requirements are determined by the teachers, with input from other school professionals as well as parents and the students themselves. To succeed, students must aim for the maximum development of their strengths. Success represents the achievement of a different level of competencies for each student. Since learning is continuous, success is always possible.

This new way of working is certain to benefit students, both those who perform well and those who require additional help. Everyone will have the opportunity to achieve objectives set at the maximum of their potential. Since students will be directly involved in establishing their school path and encouraged by their successes, their motivation will grow. This in turn will help reduce behaviour problems in class.

Moreover, this new vision of the education system holds several attractions for teachers. First, it humanizes a difficult and almost impossible task: that of getting all students to reach the same place at the same time. Second, the multiplication of successes among students is equally rewarding for teachers. Teachers know that few sights are as satisfying or rewarding as the proud, smiling face of a child who has succeeded. Finally, this vision helps counter professional solitude. With the entire school being responsible for a student's success, the teacher's burden is lightened.

Like any change, the passage from the traditional mode of ranking students to one of continuous progress requires an adjustment period. It proposes a different vision and a different way of working—and highlights that the teacher is key to student success.

By Marie Hélène Giguère
(Translation)

École Bienville:

Thanks to differentiated pedagogical practices, targeted complementary educational services and close collaboration among its cycle team and school team members, Bienville elementary school in Montreal has erased the phrase "grade repetition" from its vocabulary.

Even before it became a pilot school for implementation of the education reform, Bienville school had already begun a profound process of change, as of 1996. Faced with a large number of students in difficulty, the teachers decided to start by establishing a systemic portrait of their student population. "Bienville school is located in a poor socio-economic neighbourhood," explained Richard Émond, one of the teachers actively involved. "Parents are often unemployed or have unstable jobs. On average, families have just $75 to $100 a month for food. So school is not their first priority. In total, more than sixty cultural communities attend our elementary school. What's more, the school is physically isolated by major roads. The majority of our 500 students were considered to have learning difficulties."

This sombre portrait led to a serious reflection among teachers at Bienville. "I began to question my teaching practices and my conception of learning," Émond continued. "I became aware of the importance of team work."

The school team, which includes professionals from complementary educational services, sat down together to determine how to provide better assistance to all students experiencing difficulties. "A learning community of professionals emerged from this meeting, and a flurry of new teaching practices ensued."

The first pillar of school organization at Bienville is team work. The cycle teams meet every Wednesday afternoon. "The children go back home and into the community. This class time is spread out over the other four days of the week," Émond explained. This means the school administration had decided to modify its practices too, by agreeing to review the organization of class time. Responsibility for interventions with at-risk students is shared by the homeroom teachers, subject specialists and special ed teacher. This precious meeting time is devoted to common planning, but also to consultation. "The special ed teacher can advise the other teachers," said Jean Archambault, from the Supporting Montreal Schools program (MEQ). "For example, by nature of their training, special ed teachers are specialists in metacognition. And in so far as learning consists in building competencies and mobilizing knowledge, learning difficulties are often the result of a metacognitive problem."

The special ed teacher therefore took on a new role at Bienville. "First we would conduct an overall assessment of the student having difficulty. Follow-up could then be done individually or in small groups," explained Marie-Andrée Verreault, who now works at the Centre d'aide et de ressources à l'enfance of the Fondation Lucie et André Chagnon. But Verrault's role was even broader: "I organized workshops in the classrooms, and I helped students directly. However, my role was also to support the teacher *for* the student."

At the heart of the process of change at Bienville, however, was pedagogical differentiation. "We knew that to ensure their success, we had to place our students in mini life projects. Examples had to be taken from everyday life; authentic and meaningful tasks were to be used in order to give students control over their learning," said Émond. But not everyone was comfortable with the concept of differentiation. In collaboration with his cycle team, Émond created a support system to help teachers plan and develop differentiated learning activities. This support can take the shape of meetings between homeroom teachers, or classroom observation. Émond's advisory role has since been judged so valuable that he is now exclusively a resource teacher. "At first, it's embarrassing to let another teacher come into your class, but you get used to it very quickly," Émond noted. "By differentiating your teaching, you can eliminate many learning difficulties. This allows the special ed teacher to better target his or her interventions and to provide better follow-up."

Pedagogical differentiation requires a change in our practices; however, this transformation comes primarily from changing the way we think about learning. "If we admit that all students are different, the question of grade repetition no longer makes sense as a support measure for students," concluded Archambault.

As a school serving a very disadvantaged community, École Bienville has access to several financial assistance programs. However, Émond refuses to credit these resources for the school's accomplishments. "We had the same resources before. And it wasn't working," he pointed out.

In short, the success of École Bienville comes no doubt from the fact that the school team chose to work for the continuous progress and success of all students, rather than trying to find a substitute solution for grade repetition.

Richard Émond, teacher at Bienville school

By Pascale Sauvé
(Translation)

For the past three years, the students and staff at École secondaire Cap-Jeunesse have been grouped into families. Adopting this model of school organization was a revelation: never before have ties between school members been so close. Through these family units, school has taken on a whole new meaning.

A few years ago, the school team was looking for an organizational model in line with the principles and orientations of the reform. After much deliberation, the team opted for a family structure. The model has gradually been implemented in the school over the last three years. "It's still under construction," said Huguette Martin, vice-principal. "Each day, we're reinventing secondary school," said Claire Desrosiers, the school principal. They continue to try out new ideas and make adjustments. But already, they have come a long way.

Families

Adopting a new organizational model necessarily demands some major changes, in terms of structure, pedagogy and administration. "To achieve a viable model, it's important that the changes be integrated on all levels," noted Martin. One change influences another. "For example, it was when we adopted new work methods that teaching practices began to change."

Work units—called families—were created. The school's 1 600 students and 140 staff members all belong to one of 13 families. Each family is made up of four to six mixed student groups, as well as a stable team of teachers from several disciplines. This organization into subgroups has many benefits: it facilitates partnerships and collaboration, while allowing staff to get to know each one of the students in their family, to follow their progress and adapt to their needs.

To support this collaborative work, opportunities for planning and discussion had to be created. The school came up with a solution that offers even wider benefits. Each student is given a profile, which they choose according to their interests (such as computers, outdoor activities, music, communications, art, fashion or hockey). A block of four periods per nine-day cycle is devoted to the student profile, thereby freeing teachers from the core curriculum so that they can all meet together.

Huguette Martin, vice-principal

Driven by the pedagogical principles promoted by the reform, the families have demonstrated initiative. There is a growing emergence of tasks modeled on differentiation and destreaming of the student population; activities are close to students' lives and needs. In fact, the timetable has been modified to allow for greater flexibility. For example, 10% to 20% of school time is devoted to integrating projects, and some periods on the student's schedule are reserved for activities in which students are grouped according to learning needs as opposed to grade level. "Our view of time has changed. We no longer see it as a constraint, but as a resource that can be put to the service of our students," said Martin.

Students at risk

At École secondaire Cap-Jeunesse, all students enjoy pedagogical support services, representing a dozen hours each term. Additional support measures have been set up for at-risk students who, it should be noted, have been gradually integrated into regular classes.

Like other students, these students follow a core curriculum and choose a profile, which keeps up their motivation. However, their ecology classes have been removed from their schedules and replaced by four team-taught, pedagogical support periods.

The school has set up additional resources to carry out team teaching in French, mathematics, English and geography, in order to provide support measures at two strategic times during the term and to create a portfolio to complement the report card. The results are promising. "The success rate with this model has been astounding," said the principal. "60% of students who made it to Secondary II had not finished their Elementary 6."

The results

After three years in these family groupings and frequent adjustments to the model, the school's administrators have come to certain conclusions. They have noticed that the families are increasingly concerned with the success of their students and more attentive to their learning needs. There has been an improvement in the learning climate, in the quality of relations and in follow-up, ensuring better student support and guidance. There is a more constructive professional atmosphere and greater involvement in group projects and consultations.

Administrators have also noticed the difference among their students. Students work more often on meaningful and integrating projects. They are happier at school, more responsible and more motivated, because they are more active and involved. However, students still expect quantified results in order to commit themselves to learning; they often feel pushed by the requirements of the transition period, and they have to adapt to a culture of effort, rigour and mutual help.

For teachers, there is greater professional pride and motivation. They feel less isolated and take greater pleasure in working with colleagues. Increasingly, resistance to change is dropping, and many teachers are asking for more professional development. Nonetheless, some find it hard to change their routine and work habits. They have stricter requirements when it comes to planning teaching, and are requesting more professional time for sharing and networking. There is also a higher tendency for professional burnout—a problem the administration is trying to address.

An evolving model

Next year, the school plans to adapt its model to the new *Basic School Regulation* and cycle-based learning, to extend the timetable by one day to gain more pedagogical days, to develop the guidance-oriented school (in particular for at-risk students), to provide more training on the QEP and to increase involvement by complementary educational services, parents and the community.

One thing is clear: the school team intends to continue along the current lines, because the benefits for students and teachers alike are already substantial. With this model of small work teams and meeting time built in, never has so much attention and effort been devoted to finding the means and strategies to help all students build their future.

"Our view of time has changed. We no longer see it as a constraint, but as a resource that can be put to the service of our students."

Orientations for the organization of services for at-risk students in secondary school, inspired by the management frameworks*

A few reminders:

- Organize services in keeping with the aims, orientations and structure of the Québec Education Program (QEP)
- Evaluate needs using a systemic vision of education and intervention
- Organize services based on students' needs and abilities and the resources of the cycle team
- Take action with a view to lifelong learning
- Foster the implementation of services that enable students to stay in regular classes
- Diversify assistance measures and groupings to meet specific needs. For example:
  - set up measures for prevention, consolidation and remediation
  - integrate students into regular classes by providing additional teacher support or student support in some subjects, as needed
  - integrate students into regular classes and group them into resource classes for some subjects
  - choose stimulating projects and group students by project, rather than by learning difficulty or level of ability
- For students experiencing the most difficulty, offer learning situations that take into account their interests and learning style, while still targeting the development of the competencies outlined in the QEP
- Ensure that students in difficulty have access to the concentrations or options offered to other students in the school when they are able or when it will help them progress

* *Québec Education Program, Policy on Special Education*

By Paule Belleau
(Translation)

A new framework guiding the use of the individualized education plan will be available in schools shortly. One workshop gave participants an opportunity to become familiar with some of the new orientations they will find in this reference document, while another provided concrete examples of how one school has been applying these concepts.

The reference framework was written by Christiane Joncas, from the Direction de l'adaptation scolaire et des services complémentaires at the MEQ, and France St-Onge, principal of Les Pionniers school of the Commission scolaire des Découvreurs. The two women worked in collaboration with the Groupe de concertation en adaptation scolaire and drew from the results of a study conducted by a team from the Université du Québec à Rimouski on the use of the individualized education plan in various schools.

The orientations proposed do not change the basic principles underlying the individualized education plan (IEP). Rather, they aim to improve the effectiveness of actions surrounding this document, which is to be used as a student-support measure. The new orientations also incorporate elements from other documents framing the educational mission of schools, such as the Québec Education Program (QEP) and the Policy on Special Education.

Carole Dansereau, principal of Guillaume-Vignal elementary school, explained how she has turned the IEP into a veritable development tool for students experiencing learning difficulties. Her comments, along with the explanations given by Joncas and St-Onge, illustrate the orientations proposed in the new reference framework.

Differentiate success

With this first orientation, the authors of the framework remind us that the QEP is mandatory for all students. However, using the individualized education plan, the QEP can be adapted to support students with disabilities or learning difficulties. The concept of "educational success" replaces that of "school success," fostering the recognition of students' progress rather than just the knowledge or skills they have acquired. In school, student equity is more a question of allowing all students to develop their competencies to the best of their abilities (i.e. differentiation) than a matter of having a single expectation for all students. Portfolios, now used in many schools, help educators adopt this approach, because they provide concrete examples of a student's work and his or her progress. Some schools also use portfolios to follow up on the IEP.

Make students a part of their success

This orientation takes on a particular connotation when we consider that, according to the study by the Université du Québec à Rimouski research team, two thirds of students do not participate in developing their IEP. Making the student a part of his or her success requires not only the presence of the student at meetings to build and follow up on the IEP, but also that the student be offered a constructive and reassuring environment that encourages his or her commitment. Students must feel that they are backed by a supportive team, rather than judged by a tribunal. It is also important that

Christiane Joncas, from the Direction de l'adaptation scolaire et des services complémentaires at the MEQ, and France St-Onge, principal of Les Pionniers school of the Commission scolaire des Découvreurs

The new framework for the individualized education plan highlights the need to adopt flexible procedures and follow-up measures that are systematic but adapted to the different kinds of problems encountered by students throughout their education. The various ways in which some schools have made use of IEPs shows the creativity that school teams can have in adapting their practices to meet young people's needs.

The IEP remains a tool for individualized monitoring and a process for collaboration and problem-solving. The new orientations should help make it an effective tool for achieving success among all students.

students understand the meaning of the process, and that they be invited to participate in the decision-making. Particular attention should therefore be given to establishing and maintaining a climate of respect during these meetings.

One workshop participant, a teacher who works in the area of individualized paths for learning, explained that her students draw their own portrait of their strengths and difficulties, and then set objectives. As a team, they think about what measures will help them meet these objectives. For her part, Dansereau says she has become very adept at putting herself in the student's shoes—an exercise that does not necessarily come naturally. "As adults, whether as a school principal, teacher or parent, we tend to put words into the student's mouth," she explained. When speaking to her students, she suggests they view the meetings as gifts to themselves, where they can choose their own objectives.

Adopt a systemic vision of the student's situation

Adopting a systemic vision means taking into account the various aspects of the student's environment, in order to reduce or eliminate any obstacles he or she might face. Personal, family and social factors must be taken into account to analyze the problem the student needs to resolve. Joncas and St-Onge noted that the pedagogical aspect is rarely mentioned in IEPs, for fear of calling into question the competency of school staff. Yet sometimes the school itself may be contributing to the student's difficulty; analyzing one's own pedagogical practices shows a high degree of professionalism.

Focus on the student's strengths and school resources

To encourage students to become actively involved in the process of developing an IEP, the authors recommend directing the intervention according to the students' successes rather than their problems. Their strengths should be taken into account at each step in the process. The student's presence at the meetings scheduled for working on his or her IEP fosters this approach. Dansereau illustrated this orientation eloquently by sharing the example of a student who was withdrawn and discouraged by school. The school team began with one of her qualities: her willingness to help others. By leading sports and reading activities for preschool children, the student experienced the success she needed to take action toward her own learning.

School resources can also be organized to better meet the needs highlighted in IEPs. At Guillaume-Vidal school, the timetable and tasks of the special ed teacher were revamped to create a service with "variable geography." The special ed teacher now has five free periods each week that can be used to interchange activities when required to follow up on the IEP, as well as one weekly period per cycle to provide one-on-one guidance to help students carry out their plans. Work meetings with students and classroom activities are also part of the timetable, which varies throughout the year.

Intensify collaboration between the school, family and community

Students are not the only ones who need to know the meaning of their plan: parents do too. Parents can do much more than provide and receive information, if the school gives them the opportunity.

Intensifying collaboration also requires that more attention be devoted to the transitions that students must undertake, and to developing closer ties with the various institutions that play a part in their education (from school to the youth centre or workshop, from elementary to secondary school, etc.). This is an issue likely to be given increasing attention over the next few years.

Johanne Barrett, resource person

Carole Dansereau, principal of Guillaume-Vidal elementary school

By Eve Krakow

Pontiac High School

Three years ago, faced with an alarming dropout rate and low student performance levels, educators at Pontiac High School (WQSB) had to ask themselves some hard questions. They have since implemented a number of strategies that have increased student motivation, raised student achievement, and improved the overall atmosphere in the school.

Principal Mike Dubeau and teachers Don Stevens and Gordon Graham discussed three initiatives in particular: the welding program, the "A" team, and a Cycle One model involving teacher teams and mentoring for every student.

Welding program

The welding program began as a pilot project three years ago. Its goal was to motivate students to stay in school—particularly Secondary III boys. "We wanted a grassroots solution that was pro-active with the QEP and that maximized the use of existing facilities," Stevens explained.

The two-year program includes the basic academic courses, plus a halfday of welding each day. A Canadian Welding Bureau (CWB) testing centre was established at the school so that students can obtain their welding certificate. However, the program is designed to ensure that students who successfully complete all courses also receive their Secondary School Diploma (SSD).

The results have been remarkable. In the first year alone, discipline referrals and absenteeism dropped significantly. Students' attitudes toward the school changed. During a recent food drive, the welding group brought in the most food. "These are students who normally wouldn't have wanted to have anything to do with it."

"The majority of the students that came into the first year of the program were students at risk of dropping out," Stevens noted. Many were failing and considered severe discipline problems. Their success testifies to that of the program. "William had a hard time staying on task. The welding program helped bring focus and motivation. He passed the CWB test, received his SSD and is now a full-time employee at a shingle mill." Gary, who admitted being frustrated with the pressure of school since Elementary 3, did not obtain his SSD, but got his welding licence and now works for a commercial welding firm.

Mike Dubeau, principal of Pontiac High School

Don Stevens, welding program teacher

Another positive outcome has been coordinated planning and teacher collaboration. "The teachers involved with this program have really worked hard, and it has spread to other areas," said Stevens. "It has moved from a pilot project into a template that we now glean off of for all our other activities."

The "A" Team

The "A" team is a group of teachers assigned responsibility for improving overall student achievement (hence the letter "A"). It is composed of one teacher per grade, a teacher from the welding program, the guidance counsellor, the school success technician, and the principal.

"We're trying to raise the bar for every single student in the school," explained Graham. The A-team leader for Secondary IV. A-team teachers meet individually with each student, identify underachieving students and apply appropriate intervention strategies. They communicate with the parents, assign mentors, and facilitate learning partnerships both within the school and externally.

They meet as a team every two weeks. "This has turned into a best practices forum: we hash out what went well, what went wrong, how our teachers are doing," said Graham. A-team teachers have an 80% teaching workload to allow time for the increased responsibilities.

Intervention strategies include building student profiles (to help determine why a particular type of student is underachieving), helping students set specific targets, mentoring, tutorial and homework rooms (supervision is built into teachers' schedules), parental contact, performance contracts, and personalized and peer tutoring.

The results? For students, it's becoming "cool" to succeed. "You can tell from the way the kids are excited about their marks," said Graham. For teachers, the focus has shifted from just their own classroom to looking at the student's overall performance. "The A-team is also a great spot to nip things in the bud. Issues related to poor academic performance do not escalate into behaviour problems."

Raising the bar for all students means average students too. One example was Holly; she participated and behaved well in class, appeared to understand everything, and did not have problems reading or writing. But she averaged in the low 70s. "Normally she would have slipped below the radar," said Graham. But the A-team noticed and decided she could do better. They called a meeting with her, her parents and the principal. For Holly, that's all it took. "She was amazed that anyone was hassling her for getting low 70s and doing what she was told. It was a shock to the rest of the class too—suddenly they saw that lurking in the weeds wasn't going to be acceptable anymore. It brought everyone's marks up." Holly finished the year with marks in the mid 80s.

Teachers have shifted their focus from just their own classroom to the student's overall performance.

Cycle One model

Pontiac has also reorganized its Secondary I and II groups to foster stronger teacher-student relations and provide more individualized support. Teams of three teachers teach two groups of students. They teach all core subjects, and meeting time is planned into their schedules. The A-team leaders coordinate meetings and cross-curricular projects.

Mentoring plays a large role: all 220 students in Cycle One have mentors. At the start of each term, the student sits down with his or her mentor and sets targets for every subject. At the end of the term, if the targets are not met, the A-team examines the problem.

Other organizational strategies include scheduling mathematics for all Secondary I and II students at the same time (allowing for remediation and enrichment opportunities), and physically reorganizing the school so that the entire cycle is concentrated in one area of the building.

At the end of the third term last year, 77.4% of student targets had been met. No less than 60 students made the honour roll (i.e. average of 80% or higher). Referrals to the principal's office have gone down, allowing him to concentrate on things other than discipline and behaviour.

Learning partnerships

Learning partnerships are another key element in the school culture. Internal partnerships include mentoring for new teachers and an open door policy, where any teacher can walk into another teacher's classroom to observe. External partnerships include staff exchanges, visits and dialogue with Ravens Wood School in Bromley, U.K., St. Patrick High School in Quebec City (CQSB), and Symmes Junior High School in Aylmer (WQSB).

By Eve Andrew

Transition to secondary school:

The transition from elementary school to secondary school is difficult for many students. To help smooth this transition, last year, LaurenHill Academy (EMSB) set up a four-day summer camp to give incoming students a taste of what was to come.

Twenty-four students participated in the camp, which took place over four mornings in late August. "The idea was to give students a taste of high school and alleviate some of their fears before school started," explained Douglas Houston, who initiated the project.

Currently principal of the Outreach School System of the English Montreal School Board, Houston was vice-principal of LaurenHill Academy for five years. He first heard about the idea of a summer camp for incoming Secondary I students at a conference in the United States. However, it was during his year as principal of Carlyle Elementary School in 2002-2003 that the idea for a mini-camp for his own students took shape.

Houston worked with Angeline Roumeliotis, then principal of LaurenHill Academy (now regional director for the EMSB), to set up the project. They discussed the idea with LaurenHill's feeder schools and sent invitations to the parents of 50 students. Although one of the project's goals was to target "at-risk" students, an attempt was made to create a heterogeneous grouping of students in order to mimic the real-life make-up of school and avoid any stigma being attached to participation in the camp.

Teachers were asked if they would be available to offer one or more mornings of instruction before they officially returned to school in August. They were paid at scale for their time involved in the project. "I came up with the broad concept, but it was really the teachers who put the details together," Houston noted.

Nancy Lemieux was one of those teachers. Her enthusiasm was clear as she explained how the camp was organized. The camp took place over four mornings in late August, and involved 24 students, 7 teachers and the school administration. The students were divided into two groups and given a timetable following a cycle schedule (days 1 to 4). They had three one-hour periods each day, beginning and ending in homeroom, plus recess and snack time. Students got a taste of ten subjects, including dance, drama, computers, science, physical education, English, French and mathematics.

Two periods were used to show students things such as how to find their way around the school ("Our school is a labyrinth, there's no other word for it!"), read a timetable, organize their binders, open combination locks for their lockers and wait their turn at the cafeteria. "They got used to cycle days, picking up their books and moving to another classroom. They learned about multiple teachers and some of the school rules," said Lemieux. "This way, when they would start school, it wouldn't all be new, they'd have heard some of it before."

At the end of the four days, many of the students' fears and anxieties had disappeared. When school started, they naturally acted as ambassadors, showing other students how to read their timetables, how to get to class and how to open their locks. "Often, the fears new students have about the social and people aspects of secondary school get in the way of learning. So the sooner those anxieties are alleviated, the better," said Roumeliotis.

The camp fits in with a variety of other initiatives at LaurenHill to help students from the elementary schools get to know the secondary school. These include sharing the school's facilities (for example, the pool) with the community; inviting Elementary 6 students to the secondary students' drama and dance performances; bussing in students from the feeder schools to give them a half-day tour of the school, with Secondary II students serving as their guides; and common projects, such as having Secondary III students design toys for kindergarten children in their ITT class.

Angeline Roumeliotis, regional director for the EMSB and former principal of LaurenHill Academy

Douglas Houston, principal of the Outreach School System of the English Montreal School Board and former vice principal of LaurenHill Academy

In her workshop, Lynn Senecal, Coordinator of the Learning Difficulties Resources Centre (Inclusive Education Service), discussed the process of designing inclusive learning environments.

By Eve Krukow

In all school boards, we're facing large numbers of students at risk—among them, students with learning disabilities," Senecal noted. "This distinction is important. We must consider the needs of all students at risk, not simply those who have been identified with specific learning disabilities, when designing inclusive learning environments."

Fortunately, research indicates that 'best practices' for students at risk are consistent with those for all learners. Thus, the challenge is not one of developing dozens of 'special-needs' programs, but of adopting those practices that best serve all learners.

Using the MEQ's recently issued *Students with Learning Difficulties: Reference Framework for Intervention* as her starting point, Senecal focused on how to create the conditions for learning. She approached the issue in terms of four resources: knowledge and understanding, human resources, the learning environment, and instruction and assessment.

What is required of the learner?

Under 'knowledge and understanding,' Senecal emphasized the need to understand the demands of different types of learning. "It's not enough to look at a student's learning profile. We need also to ask what a given task requires of the brain," she said. It's the interaction of these two that helps us to determine what approaches will be successful.

To illustrate, she looked at the question through the lens of a student with ADHD. "ADHD is not a problem of knowing, but of doing. It is a performance or output disorder—a failure to put knowledge into action. As such, skills instruction alone, whether social or academic, is of limited benefit to students with ADHD. Their core need is for strategies instruction."

Other areas requiring knowledge and understanding include human development (What is typical of various stages of development, and what are the realistic expectations at these stages?), links between personal/social and academic learning, potential obstacles to learning, and promising practices. The last is of particular importance. "What evidence supports the use of a given approach? We have to prevent the resurgence of old, ineffective practices," said Senecal. She gave the example of a recent television report making unrealistic claims about an outdated practice. "Schools received many calls from parents asking why the approach was not being used with their child. If something sounds too good to be true, it probably is," she cautioned.

Under 'human resources,' she discussed the need to establish a coherent, research-supported framework, to define roles and partnerships within that framework (e.g. homeroom and resource teachers), to establish a supportive environment (How are the efforts and well-being of teachers and learners being supported?), and to engage parents and families.

In terms of the learning environment, elements include the use of space (How can classroom and common areas be organized to support academic and personal/social learning in inclusive schools?), technology, and atmosphere (What makes schools welcoming? How can colour, light, the arts, language, and music be used to create a positive climate?).

Finally, in the area of instruction and assessment, we need to examine the learning outcomes being sought for all students, and in particular, for students with special needs; the models, approaches and content that will best support these outcomes; how to make informed choices regarding instructional materials, and the links between assessment and instruction.

Intervention strategies

Senecal provided a wealth of detail on different types of learning difficulties, and discussed strategies that teachers can use in their classrooms to support these learners. She illustrated many of her points with samples of student writing.

The template proposed in this workshop ("Creating the Conditions for Learning: Designing Inclusive Learning Environments") as well as information on classroom intervention strategies for educators, can be found on the Website of the Learning Difficulties Resource Centre (soon to be called Shapes of Mind). This is accessed through *Insight*, the online resource centre of the Inclusive Education Service (IES).

The IES is a provincial service designed to support inclusive education in Québec's English school boards. Originally a general support service, IES has since developed into a network of specialty centres, each with its own service model, resources, and Web pages. These include the Centre of Excellence for Autism Spectrum Disorders; the Centre of Excellence for the Physically, Intellectually and Multi-Challenged; the Centre of Excellence for Behaviour Management; the Centre of Excellence for Speech and Language Development; and the Learning Difficulties Resource Centre.

Look for *Insight* under the QESN-RECIT Website, at <www.qesnrecit.qc.ca>.

By Eve Krakow

Reading and Writing

Consultants Anne Lemay (Central Québec School Board) and Barb Tarrant (Lester B. Pearson School Board) described a framework for literacy instruction that is being implemented in all elementary schools in their respective boards. Called Balanced Literacy, the approach gives teachers the tools to work with learners of varying levels to help them build their language skills.

Anne Lemay, consultant from the Central Québec School Board

Balanced Literacy involves an apprenticeship approach where students are given the necessary support to become readers and writers," said Lemay. "It occurs when there is a balance between direct teaching and constructivist learning." Teachers are at the heart of this approach, she added. "They're really the ones who make the decisions, who facilitate the learning atmosphere in the classroom, and who give a sense of belonging to students."

The approach was developed in response to several needs: to address the literacy goals in the success plans of many schools; to measure student literacy achievement (to see if measures implemented were working); to meet a school board objective of every child being literate by the end of Elementary Cycle One; and to develop common understandings and materials as a basis for professional conversations and cycle team collaboration.

"We wanted students to stay in the classroom, not to be pulled out," Tarrant added. "We wanted to make sure this reading and writing development could be done with a sense of belonging in the classroom, even for our struggling learners."

Drawing from a model used in Edmonton's public schools, Lemay and Tarrant developed Balanced Literacy, an instructional framework that fits in with the QEP and that has differentiation built in. "Literacy is a repertoire of language strategies, processes, skills and knowledge brought to every learning situation. What we really focus on is making those strategies visible to students and helping students internalize them," said Tarrant.

The Balanced Literacy approach has four main components:

Modeled reading

In modeled reading, the teacher reads daily to the whole class, thinking aloud to demonstrate reading behaviours. This latter step is key, says Tarrant. "The teacher models her thinking and makes her strategies visible to the students, so that students understand what good readers do when they come to a problem." The teacher selects books that are above the students' level of ability. A balance of expository (information) and narrative texts are used.

Shared and interactive reading

The second component is shared and interactive reading. "Here the text should be a little less difficult than what the teacher chooses to read aloud, but a little more difficult than what most of the children in the class can read by themselves." The students read the text together (as a whole class or in groups), with the teacher. Once again, strategies are modeled and key elements highlighted.

Guided reading

"Guided reading is the heart of the program," said Tarrant. "Students are put into small groups to read texts at their instructional level, meaning texts they can ready with 90-95% accuracy and comprehension." The children read silently to themselves. One child whisper-reads to the teacher, who gives feedback. Teachers follow a specific framework for what to do before, during and after the guided reading (scaffolding).

Grouping can be done in various ways; informal and formal methods can be used to assess student levels. "I always encourage teachers to really build the community atmosphere in the classroom, set up the infrastructure and get to know their students well before grouping and beginning guided reading," Lemay noted.

To do guided reading, teachers require several copies of one book, at the appropriate reading level. One school decided to invest to ensure that its teachers would have these tools. It set up a Guided Reading Bookroom—a wall of shelves containing multiple copies of books, sorted by level. There is a bin for each reading level, each bin containing bags of books. The books are shared by the entire school. "Sharing is a mentality to be developed," the consultants noted. While not all schools have the money to invest in new books, "you can start by looking at what teachers and classrooms already have."

But what are the other students doing when the teacher is working with a small group? In their in-service sessions with teachers, Lemay and Tarrant discuss various classroom management strategies teachers can use, such as developing activity centres.

Independent reading

The fourth component of the balanced literacy approach is independent reading. Teachers help students choose a book at the appropriate level, i.e. one the student can read with 94% accuracy or higher. (In their in-service sessions, Lemay and Tarrant show teachers how to help students select appropriate books.) Independent reading is a daily activity that is supported or enriched by book talks, literature circles, mini-lessons, etc.

These four types of activities also apply to writing. The teacher models writing by composing and writing texts for students to view, describing the strategies used during the writing process. The students observe, respond and ask questions. In shared and interactive writing, the teacher supports the students by writing with them and by focusing on strategies to help guide the way in which the text is constructed. Students work together to compose a text.

In guided writing, the teacher facilitates growing independence through whole class and small group instruction on specific writing skills. In independent writing, the teacher provides daily writing opportunities where students can make choices. Students write on a variety of topics for different purposes across disciplines.

One of the principles of the balanced literacy approach is that teachers spend a minimum of two hours a day on literacy. "This doesn't mean two hours of English Language Arts," said Lemay. "It can be done in French, math and various other subject areas."

At the Central Québec School Board, the balanced literacy approach is being implemented in all schools, cycle by cycle. A literacy team of six teachers, led by Lemay, coordinate the implementation by providing in-service training sessions to all teachers. There is a two-year focus on each cycle, with ongoing support for the previous cycle(s).

At the Lester B. Pearson School Board, schools develop individual Literacy Plans and request support as needed. There is an annual focus on one cycle, with ongoing support for the previous cycle(s). The approach is being implemented simultaneously in English and French. "Using the same strategies in English and French class provides reinforcement and transfer opportunities for the students," said Tarrant.

One school set up a Guided Reading Bookroom, containing multiple copies of books, sorted by level. The books are shared by the entire school.

After two days of presentations, workshops and discussions on the success of students experiencing difficulties at school, what have participants retained? What tools and ideas will they bring back to their schools and boards? Six participants shared their thoughts.

Francine Payette, conference master of ceremonies and co-editor-in-chief of Schoolscapes, surrounded by participants

Éric Pouliot
Coordinator for special education and complementary educational services, Commission scolaire des Navigateurs

Above all, what I come away with is that we're asking teachers to engage in a process of reflecting on their practices, so it's important that we ourselves, as managers, go through this process as well in order to guide them. I also realize that special education is not a separate unit grafted onto the school board, but that it should be an integral part of the school board and all its decisions. Also, that special education really takes place in the classroom, by adapting regular services to the needs and abilities of each student.

Josée Rourke
Director of complementary educational services, Eastern Townships School Board

What I learned at this conference is that we often face the same problems, the same difficulties, and that we all believe in the individual needs of each student. As a board, we have to know how to support those who are closest to our students. The competency-based approach, the differentiated approach and the individualized education plan were developed to help our students, so we shouldn't give up. We have to take it one small step at a time. Sometimes we feel like it's not a ladder but a merry-go-round, and we have the impression that we're going backwards instead of forward, but we have to continue the process.

Anne Julien
Psychologist, Commission scolaire Beauce-Etchemin

With all the upheavals that the reform is causing in our schools, many people are afraid to undertake new projects. A conference like this one encourages you to make the leap in spite of your reservations, because you see all the projects people are trying out in other schools across the province. In one workshop I attended, on non-mixed groups, we were called on to look at the research data in a new way. An event like this one gives us a chance to step back and think, because in our day-to-day work and in the heat of the action, we don't always have the time or energy to do so.

Jacques Mercier
Vice-principal of Polyvalente St-Georges, Commission scolaire Beauce-Etchemin

I've noticed that the texts are now all very consistent. Finally! The texts that young administrators and school staff will have at their disposal to become familiar with the reform will be meaningful and consistent. A lot of work has been accomplished in this area. In secondary school, management under the reform is a serious concern. We didn't wait for the new curriculum; we started four or five years ago. We're already doing pirouettes! For example, promotion by subject and building the timetables is quite a challenge! I can see that my staff need to be reassured. As administrators, we often feel alone making decisions in our offices, but a conference like this one has given me confidence. I'm not alone and we're all in this together.

Colette Thibault
Principal of Harfang des neiges elementary school, Commission scolaire Marguerite-Bourgeois

I'm taking back a toolbox of ideas that will help me differentiate my practices in general. It's not enough to say that teachers have to differentiate their pedagogical practices: other professionals and administrators have to engage in this process of change too. One observation: you can have all the human and financial resources you want, but if your professional practices stay the same, the change will not last. Genuine change in our practices will only occur if we sit down together and think about how to do things differently. Change comes from the inside, but it requires support, time, commitment and, especially, that each and every person work together.

Richard Émond
Resource teacher at Bienville elementary school, Commission scolaire de Montréal

To me, the most important thing is collaboration between the school's many stakeholders. I think we have to continue to highlight the benefits of multidisciplinary team work, cycle teams, inter-cycle teams, bi-cycle teams and tri-cycle teams! What I retain is that regardless of the quantity of services offered, or the means and methods set in motion to foster student success, I think the key to success for all students comes primarily from the commitment of all stakeholders to a profound change in our conceptions of learning, and then from an appropriate transformation of our educational practices.

The Advisory Board on English Education (ABEE) recently released its report to the Minister of Education, entitled "Profile of the Teacher as Keystone in Secondary Reform Implementation."

You can find the report at <www.meq.gouv.qc.ca/CELA/anglais.htm>

For a list of other professional development activities and events in the English sector, consult the calendar on the QESN-RECIT Website.

www.qesnrecit.qc.ca

Dear Monsieur Germain,
I let the commotion around me these days subside a bit before speaking to you from the bottom of my heart. I have just been given far too great an honor, one I neither sought nor solicited. But when I heard the news, my first thought, after my mother, was of you. Without you, without the affectionate hand you extended to the small poor child that I was, without your teaching, and your example, none of all this would have happened. I don't make too much of this sort of honor. But at least it gives me an opportunity to tell you what you have been and still are for me, and to assure you that your efforts, your work, and the generous heart you put into it still live in one of your little schoolboys who, despite the years, has never stopped being your grateful pupil. I embrace you with all my heart.
Albert Camus

SCHOOLSCAPES
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